BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Paul Tognetti

Paul Tognetti was born in California in 1920. He is the second youngest of five children born to his Swiss immigrant parents and was raised on the family dairy farm in Salinas Valley.

He graduated from high school in 1939, then attended San Jose State University on a basketball scholarship. As part of the school's football team, he came to Hawai'i to play a police benefit game and a game against the University of Hawai'i, which was scheduled for December 13, 1941.

When the war started, Tognetti stayed in Hawai'i and joined the police force. In July 1944, he was drafted into the army and served for two years. After his release from the service, he married and worked for Hawaiian Pineapple Company.

In 1948 he returned to his hometown to work for Ralston Purina, but in 1950, he decided to come back to Hawai'i, where he continued to work in the feed and grain business. He is the father of twin daughters.

Tape No. 22-7-1-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Paul Tognetti (PT)

February 11, 1992

Waikīkī, O'ahu

BY: Joe Rossi (JR)

JR: This is an interview with Paul Tognetti on February 11, 1992, at the Elks Club in Waikīkī. The interviewer is Joe Rossi.

Mr. Tognetti, maybe we could start by having you tell me a little bit about your family, your parents, where they're from.

PT: Well, my mother and dad both came to California about 1908. And they came from Switzerland, canton Ticino. And the reason for coming to California—they followed a group of pioneers, I guess, because of lack of work in Switzerland. From the Alps there, I think it took 'em about thirty days to go down, caught a ship. And as far I know, they came to New York and then across country [to] San Francisco and down into the Salinas Valley where they settled. And my mother and dad met there, in Salinas Valley.

JR: So they had come separately?

PT: They came separately, yes. But there was apparently quite a group. A colony of people from the same area settled in Salinas Valley during that time. And two brothers got involved and purchased some property, a ranch, about 300 acres. And then one brother wanted to come back to Switzerland, and so he sold out his interest to my dad. And my dad had two other brothers that came over and worked in the dairy business, and the other brother also bought a dairy. And the other brother was involved in—well, he was kind of a merchant. (Pause) I'll just say it. (Chuckles) He peddled wine and would be picked up a few times, too, by the county or the state. It was Prohibition in those days and. . . . He would never go to jail. He always paid his fines. But he liked to peddle a lot of liquor.

JR: Moonshining. (Laughs)

PT: Moonshining, yeah. Then, during the years, my mother and dad had their family. I had three brothers and a sister.

JR: Where do you fit in?

PT: I'm the second youngest. My sister was the youngest. We pretty much lived on the ranch there, four miles south of King City, in the dairy business. Then the depression came along in

'32. And Mother, basically she was the business sense of the family. She says, "We got to buy some more land, we got an opportunity here. Kids will have to work after they get out of high school and college and whatever." So they bought another 1,000 acres. Mortgaged one place and purchased the other property. Thousand acres for, I think, $27,000.

JR: Was that used for dairy land, also?

PT: That was a dairy, and it was used [as] pasture for dairying and eventually went into truck crops. And it was the old Spreckles Company. Of course, they were in the sugar business there, raising sugar beets in the valley. And they collected the water from the Salinas River, and a big ditch went through the property. Of course, it was of no value really. At that time, around '32, they put in wells, and so it kind of eliminated the big canal and we levelled it off. I think we made about fifteen, twenty acres of level land from this great big ditch and planted it. With two boys, Aldo going to college at Cal-Poly [California Polytechnic State University] down in San Luis Obispo—and Elmer followed suit. One went into animal husbandry, and Elmer went into dairying, so he came back on the farm and operated the dairy. And Aldo, with his animal husbandry background, came back on the ranch and kind of operated the truck farms, truck crops. Guido graduated from high school and stayed on the farm. And I went to San Jose [State University].

JR: If I could get you to stop here. What year were you born? What year did you come along?

PT: Nineteen twenty.

JR: Nineteen twenty. I wanted just to---I meant to ask you earlier, what were the names of your parents? What were their names?

PT: Joe and Beatrice.

JR: Do you remember your mom's maiden name?

PT: Maiden name was Ferrini.

JR: These sound like Italian names.

PT: Swiss-Italian, yes. But Mother said, "Never Italian, you're Swiss." (Laughs) So we're from the Swiss-Italian sector of the southern part of Switzerland. And basically the city there is Locarno. And around Locarno, they have the different canton. They were up in the mountains, and they called it the Hotel Effra. I think the family had some property up there and built a hotel and were in the hotel business later in the years.

JR: So you came along in '20. Were you folks isolated from other families when you were on the property or was there a town that you lived in?

PT: Well, we were four miles south of King City. And then we had an aunt in Soledad, and they were also in the dairy business, Ben Lanini and my mother's twin sister. Every week we would go visit our aunt and vice versa, they would come down the following week. And I remember, I loved my aunt's cooking. She would always bring the desserts.

JR: You had a sweet tooth?

PT: (Laughs) Yeah, wow. Panetonne and fruitcake. I've never had a better fruitcake than what she used to make—moist, delicious. Now, of course, everybody drank their wine. They loved their wine. And my dad, being [that] his brother was in moonshining, the wine, my dad did some of that on the ranch. He had friends in town would come out and they'd buy a gallon of wine. They come in, have a little lunch down in the cellar, and before they left, they always bought a gallon of wine. And he would sell it to them for about three dollars and a half [$3.50] a gallon.

JR: Do you remember ever seeing him make . . .

PT: The wine? Oh yes. We'd have a big huge vat—wooden vat made of, I believe, redwood. And every year, he'd make about ten fifty-gallon drums, about 500 gallons of wine, and this would take care of the milkers. Basically, the milkers and family use, about 500 gallons of wine.

JR: So was this all done in a barn or something?

PT: This was all done in a garage. We had a garage, and the tank was there. And of course, we'd love when the big truck came along with the grapes and crushed it all there. And you'd get good, sweet juice out of that huge vat for about three weeks, and then it would ferment and you get the hot, sour wine. But the first three weeks, we loved the juice. Zinfandel, they'd come down with Zinfandel.

JR: These were grapes that he purchased from someone else?

PT: From on the outside. They're grown up the valley, down in Gilroy, Modesto—about 100 miles from there. So every year, they'd make their own wine. And of course, in the early days they made their own cheese, and then they discontinued that. But they would make their own cheese, and we would make our own head sausage, plain sausage, and salami. We'd kill two pigs and a cow and then we'd have somebody come in that were expert at making the sausage and the head sausage. And that was always good, homemade sausages. And they'd kill this one cow and two pigs and that would be the supply for the whole year. They'd hang it up in one of the rooms and dry it. You just couldn't buy sausage today that tasted like that. These guys knew how to make it. They'd add some wine to it and—real good. So we had our own milk and plenty of that at home. And of course, it wasn't TB [tubercle bacillus] tested or anything, but it was apparently good milk. We all survived. (Laughs) But during the depression, the federal government came along and all cows had to be tested for tuberculosis. Out of possibly 150 cows, they left about thirty of our cows. The others had to all be sold, and I think they were sold, maybe, at $100 a head. And there were some dairies in the valley, they didn't leave one cow left. They just about went out of business. They took 'em all.

JR: Was the meat edible?

PT: The meat was edible. They could sell the cows. I think they got about $100 per head, which wasn't very much.

JR: No, it doesn't sound like it was.

PT: No. Today a replacement is up around $1,500. In those days, I suppose maybe they paid you half interest. Probably $200 to buy a replacement, and they probably gave you $100. It wiped out quite a few dairies, that tuberculosis program. Well, okay, tuberculosis and then maybe they had too much milk at the same time. (Laughs) But you go to Switzerland and you wonder why they don't have a surplus. It's coffee and milk, they call it café au lait. It's half milk and half coffee, but the coffee is so strong, about half of that cup of coffee has to be milk. No wonder these people don't have a surplus of milk, they pour it into their cups of coffee. It's half-and-half really.

JR: How far was the school that you had to go to?

PT: Four miles. All of us would catch a bus. A bus would come along the road, and through grade school and high school, we would catch the bus. And if we missed the bus, we would have to walk home four miles. So we didn't miss the bus very often. But we were all kind of athletes. My brother was a good athlete. He went to Cal-Poly and played football, and I kind of followed suit. I had a scholarship going to San Jose [State University] for basketball, and I ended up playing football. That gave you the board and room all year round if you made the football team. Basketball was just for the season. So I got started in football and got my board and room all year round and that helped.

JR: What were you supposed to study at college?

PT: I started out in architecture, and then I found out after the first semester that I have—I only had two years at San Jose that transferred to [University of California], Berkeley. So I decided against it and changed my major to industrial arts. If I went through four years, I'd become a teacher in industrial arts.

JR: So you were the only one of the boys that wasn't going to go back to the farming?

PT: That's right, yeah.

JR: Was that okay with your folks?

PT: Yeah. My mother had, I guess, a nephew, and he was an architect in Switzerland. And she wanted somebody in the family to be an architect. Well, I didn't make it, but I have a nephew that's an architect now. He designed this---well, I told him what I wanted down on Sunset Beach and he designed it for me. He's supposed to get about 10 percent of the cost of the house, about $15,000. He didn't take a cent. So I told him I'd remember him in my will, and I do have him in my will. And I'm starting to give away the ranch there in King City now. One percent to him, to my sister, and my two daughters. If I can do that for ten years, it will take care of the inheritance tax. About $400,000, and our government gives us about $600,000 deferment on inheritance, so it would be about a $1 million dollars deferment. When my folks passed away, we had a bill of about $200,000 inheritance tax. We had to sell about 200 acres in order to pay for that inheritance tax. And hopefully this program of gifts back the next ten years will take care of that. Plus, what the federal government gives you, we don't have to pay more inheritance tax. And then today, you've got to get into a trust

program, too. In a trust, you say who the property goes to and you bypass all the courts. It immediately becomes the property of the people that you signed it to, and they take over. There's a term there, you avoid. . . . You avoid the courts, anyway, by going through a trust.

JR: Yeah, you mean what they call probate.

PT: Probate. You avoid your probate, right.

JR: Sounds like you're planning ahead there. (Chuckles)

PT: Yeah, so it's all set up for my daughters, my sister. I thought she got shortchanged. She got all the cash. It was $100,000, and the federal government took half of that. And so she didn't get very much. So I said, "I'll give you 10 percent and your [son] 10 percent," eventually. And my daughters get 40 percent each, plus these properties down here. They'll go to both my daughters.

JR: So you went to San Jose State on a scholarship. If I could just get you to jump back a few years, when did you first get involved in your sports activities?

PT: Well, through high school. I went from '36 through '39, four years of high school there. (Pause) Maybe I started in '35. Thirty-five, '36, '37, '38. No, it was '36, '37, '38, '39. Graduated, started San Jose in '39. I was in sports. I lettered in four letters—track, basketball, baseball, and football—just like my brother did. And I guess. . . . Ike Hables, who came from King City, had a brother, Abe. They were both on the 1932 Stanford Track Team, and they went to the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles (with Ben Eastman and broke the world record in the mile relay). And he was, of course, from my hometown, so he knew the coach at San Jose State, Bill Hubbard, basketball coach, through his friendship. And I played a little bit of ball for Ike Hables. He got me to continue education. He said, "I don't care what you do in the sport, let's go to school." And so, with his interest—and he knew the coach at San Jose—he got me up there and gave me a scholarship, got me going.

JR: Were you looking at basketball first?

PT: Yeah, basketball first. And then I got up there—I was working on training table as a freshmen. I served the varsity players, and I got my board. You're able to eat during—well, yeah, it was all year. Yeah, just got my board. But then if you made the football team, you got your board and room, and that was it for the whole year.

JR: There was an added incentive.

PT: Yeah, to go make the team. And basketball, irregardless of whether you made the team or not, you only had it for one semester actually, out of the three semesters at San Jose, just during the basketball season.

JR: Did they have a strong football program?

PT: Yeah, they had quite a record. I think a couple years undefeated at San Jose. They were very

liked out here in the islands. We made two or three trips here. And of course, Ben Winkelman was the coach there at the time, and Pop Warner was the assistant coach. And between Pop Warner, fifty years of coaching, and Amos Alonzo Stagg, fifty years of coaching at University of Pacific—was then the College of Pacific—we played our centennial year, hundred years of coaching.

JR: That was a special game?

PT: Yeah, it was kind of a special game in Stockton. Fresno and Stockton were kind of our big games there in those days.

JR: Who won the century of coaching?

PT: We won the game, seven to nothing, in a big controversial play. The papers in San Francisco said there wasn't a touchdown, the guy never got over the goal line, but the official called it a touchdown.

JR: What position were you playing?

PT: I was playing quarterback on the Warner system, which is the blocking back. Then you back up the line on defense. So I was basically a blocking back.

JR: What kind of gear did you guys wear back then?

PT: Wasn't very much, compared to what they have today. I always put extra padding in, on my shoulder pads, and I remember Pop Warner says, "At least you look like a football player," big, bulging shoulder pads. And you had your knee pads and thigh pads. And they always tape your ankles. I thought it was pretty good. Of course, the helmet was—there was no guard, no face guard in those days, just a plain leather helmet. It was leather type. It was okay, cushioned. But today's equipment is so much improved.

JR: What was the reputation that Hawai'i's team had at this time? Were you in for a rough game when you came over here, or was it going to be a cakewalk or what?

PT: No, it was going to be a close game. University of Hawai'i had their star, Nolle Smith. He was their star halfback. We heard that they had a good team. I would say very similar caliber to our club, so it was going to be a close ball game. They beat Willamette [University] that afternoon on December 6, 1941. And we watched them, and it looked like we had our hands full if we were to play 'em.

JR: Had the team done much traveling, outside California?

PT: We went to San Diego. We went Nevada, played University of Nevada. Texas A & I [University] came to town. Hardin-Simmons [University] from Texas came to San Jose. And I know when we played [College of] Pacific in Stockton, we all went down by train in those days. And we flew down to San Diego, played University of San Diego. We played USF, University of San Francisco. And there was too much rivalry between San Jose and [University of] Santa Clara, and they broke off the relationship. (Chuckles) They couldn't

control student bodies.

JR: Were these road trips—was there much time for recreation or anything like that?

PT: No. You'd travel the day of the game. Like most of them were on a Friday night—night games—and you'd travel on Friday to play ball. Never go a day before. You fly down and you flew back that evening. You went by train, you came back that same night. The train ride to Stockton, that was a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun on the train.

JR: Were you a rowdy bunch?

PT: Not too rowdy. (Laughs) Went to Nevada [in 1940], we got a little rowdy over there with those houses [i.e., brothels] they have there. We thought someone said, "The coach went in there. I don't see why we can't go in?" And sure enough, we selected one kid and. . . . I don't know if you want to hear about this.

JR: No, I'd like to. (Laughs)

PT: This kid, I mean, he was kind of a, well, happy-go-lucky kid from San Luis Obispo. And we had to select somebody to—well, there was this gal in the whorehouse, and all of us, about ten of us in there, and we select one person to. . . . I don't know what you want to call it. And sure enough, we selected [him to] put on a performance. And we all laughed and giggled. (Laughs) What a sight.

JR: What was the prospect, then, of going to Hawai'i? That must have been something completely different.

PT: Yeah, then the year after was Hawai'i. We planned a year ahead, I think, when we schedule.

JR: Had you heard anything about Hawai'i?

PT: No, we didn't even know what Hawai'i was. And when we got down here, during December 7, O'ahu was being bombed, and we asked each other, "What's O'ahu?"

(Laughter)

PT: "Where is O'ahu?"

JR: You're sitting on it!

PT: Yeah, really. Everything was---I didn't think it was this large, really. I was impressed with the size of it, the mountains. And the people were so friendly.

JR: Can you remember anything you had heard or thought, even before you actually arrived?

PT: No. Well, the only thing---well, our ship was held up one day in Los Angeles, because [Saburo] Kurusu was going to Washington to negotiate peace. So the ship was held up one day. We didn't think we were going to make the trip. The tension was so mounted between

Washington and Tokyo. And then, it took off. Okay, so we came to Hawai'i. It was about a seven-day trip in those days. And the P-40 and the Grumman planes dove down on the ship here as we approached Honolulu Harbor, and all of a sudden I thought, man, this is some fortress of the Pacific. Lot of planes, lot of activity. Of course, when they had a ball game, like Saturday, December 6, everybody in town was at the ball game it seemed, and it was only a 12,000 seat capacity stadium. I remember being Downtown Honolulu, Fort Street, I never saw so many drunk sailors and GIs, midnight. And we broke training rules, came in the back door of the Moana Hotel about one o'clock in the morning. We were just getting over our sea legs and enjoying it. We did our practicing.

JR: Okay, let me get you to give me, if you can, a day-by-day kind of—what day did you guys come in? Do you remember?

PT: We came in on December 3. December 3, about the middle of the day. We were supposed to play the police benefit game, so they took us right straight up to the Pali, on Nu'uanu Avenue up to the Pali. It was the old two-lane highway. Then they had pineapple and pineapple juice and bananas up there. Just a beautiful sight.

JR: They had a bus load of you guys?

PT: Yeah, took us in the bus and took us up to the Pali. Then we came down the Pali. Then we came down to the Moana Hotel, where we were quartered, here on Waikīkī Beach. And the beach in those days was really nothing. The only sand in Waikīkī Beach was in front of the Moana and the Royal Hawaiian, those two hotels. The rest of it was coral. This entire beach that's here today is man made. Then came December 7. Having breakfast at the hotel, and we asked the waiter what was happening. "We heard some shooting and some splashes out there in the ocean, on the beach."

He says, "Oh, the army and navy practice shooting sharks and whales. Nothing to be concerned about." Till we walked out the front of the hotel and see these cars speeding down the road about sixty miles an hour.

And then we heard the first radio broadcast that morning about eight o'clock. "This is the real McCoy. The rising sun has been seen on the wings. Japanese planes are bombing Pearl Harbor." So it was really kind of unbelievable that we come out here and all of a sudden we're attacked. And it was kind of a drizzly day. I really didn't think too much about what was going on, except as darkness set in that night then it became kind of serious.

And they asked us who wanted to go to work at the police station. And we all decided yes, instead of sitting around the hotel doing nothing, wondering what to expect next. So we all went down to the police station, where they gave us MP [military police] arm bands, 1918 steel helmets, riot guns, and put us out on patrol guarding areas. My first assignment was 'A'ala Park. Said to me, "We expect paratroopers in here tonight." So I was there with my little riot gun and hoped nothing would come in. And martial law was declared. Everybody had to be off the streets. And the marines were on the waterfront, and anything that moved, their machine guns went all night. So this kept up, kind of a routine, different places where we guarded. And I guarded the Honolulu Iron Works, I think, the second night, and then I was guarding up in Nu'uanu the Japanese Consulate for several days and nights. Kept them

into the yard. In fact, they weren't even allowed outside of the building. They had to stay indoors all the time.

JR: So, what exactly was your training or instructions at this point, after they took you down to the police station?

PT: There really weren't any instructions or training at all. "Here's a gun. Use it if you need it." And then after about thirty days—or before then. Heck, after about a week, the word got around, "Hey, any of you guys want to stay here? The ship is going back on the eighteenth. It's going to take all wounded personnel aboard the ship, and you'll all be first aiders. But if some of you guys want to stay here, okay."

And some of us got together and said, "Hey, let's stay here." And we all joined the police force, and the rest of the team went back. So for three-and-a-half years we were on the Honolulu police force. And then we got our training, went through training, police-work training and the whole bit. And from guard duty, we were assigned different departments. Some got into detective work, some got in as a dispatcher. I went into investigating accidents, highway patrol. So it was enjoyable. Three-and-a-half years on the police force. Good experience, but never to make it a permanent job.

JR: Let me get this straight. That morning you heard the radio after you had seen the splashes and seen the cars racing down the road. You knew the Japanese were attacking the islands. You figured out where O'ahu was. (Chuckles)

PT: Yeah. And we saw some planes flying over. I think they were observation planes, about eleven o'clock that morning. And then some shrapnel, from either artillery or from bombs dropped in the Waikīkī area, sheared off a few coconut trees, and that kind of woke Waikīkī up.

JR: So you were sort of walking around.

PT: Walking around, yeah. We saw that, and we saw the planes, and we could see the anti-aircraft guns going after those planes. My gosh, the planes are out here and the puffs were so far away from the planes. A real poor display of shooting anti-aircraft guns.

JR: You weren't---I mean, what was the feeling at this point?

PT: At this point, like, hey, this can't be so. And we didn't know how much damage was done to Pearl Harbor—we were pretty much around the hotel there—till we heard more about it. And the rumors were circulating, there was an invasion on in the island. For three or four days, right at the beginning, there were rumors there was an invasion on the other side of the island. And of course, everybody wanted to leave. And there was no planes in those days and they had to go by ship. The *Lurline* was here, it was tied up. And really, there were no ships. But people wanted to get off the island. You could have bought this island or parts of it. Really, take it.

JR: So for the rest of the day, you spent most of your time near the Moana?

PT: Near the Moana Hotel, and walked around the Waikīkī area, basically. And saw what happened there, where these coconut trees were sheared off.

JR: Did you get a chance to talk to many people? I'm trying to figure out whether people were fearing that something was going to happen at that time or pretty calm.

PT: I could see things were pretty calm in the daytime. But when nightfall set in—and it was martial law, where people were told to be indoors—there just seemed to be a lot of excitement. And you hear an awful lot of shooting, and flares were going up in different areas. You were wondering what was happening, if there really was an invasion going on. And with the rumors that people were spreading, it didn't sound very good. You just kind of hope that there wasn't an invasion, and if there was an invasion. . . . And then you heard a lot of rumors about the armed forces. They had an alert. They were alerted about possible attack. And then you hear talk like the ammunition is at this end of the island, the weapons are at the other end. And around Hickam Field and Pearl Harbor, the relationship between the air force and the navy and the armed forces—there was a strange feeling, and you heard this, that they never worked together. The air force was in one area, and Pearl Harbor is in another area, and the army was different places, and there was no combined efforts, really. Lot of dissention in the ranks. You heard a lot about this, as you heard people talking. And I know B-17s were coming in there the next morning. We saw our own flares—they said our own people were shooting them down. Nobody believed anybody that this is a friendly aircraft up there. The tracers going up after our own planes. It was mass confusion among, it seemed to me, the military people. That was really what was going on. So with all this, you wondered what was going to happen from day to day.

JR: How many of the football players do you think they had down at the station?

PT: Well, they had all of us.

JR: All of you. So how many would that be?

PT: About thirty.

JR: About thirty. And each man got a helmet and a gun.

PT: Yes, an assignment. They got their equipment and assignment and went out in different directions. There was quite a group that were guarding Punahou School. And of course, the U.S. Engineers [Department] immediately took the entire school and used it for engineering throughout the whole war. I don't know where the kids went to school after that. But the Royal Hawaiian was submarine—navy submarine personnel took over the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. It was kind of a sub-base for personnel from the submarines.

JR: Were you allowed to stay at the Moana?

PT: We were allowed to stay at the Moana for about two weeks, then we had to get out. So we went up to Kaimukī. Two or three of us went up to Kaimukī in a house. And then there were some fellows who said, "Hey, we got a nice place down in Waikīkī." And I moved down where these—three of us stayed in a house in Waikīkī. And there was another fellow in that

same court, Tusitala Court.

Now they're a bunch of high rises. And there's quite a talk now—oh, just about a year ago. There's still some of the old houses around Tusitala, and I guess Japanese bought the houses and they're going to put up condos. And the people that are in these old houses say, "They haven't given us notice to move out and they want to come in here and bulldoze these houses." And there was a little bit of discussion in the papers here recently. I went over there and I noticed the place where we were in is all high rise now. But there's still some of the houses there around Tusitala that haven't been knocked down and are supposed to go up with condos.

JR: Were you living with some of the San Jose State . . .

PT: Yeah, players. Three of us players were staying in one house. And another fellow was next door, and he had his girlfriend come over. She apparently made the trip over here, and they got married here. And we would---I mean, everything was blacked out for about four years. And cars' headlights were all dim. You had a shield over them. Kind of a total blackout here for the islands for about four years. So in the evenings, for any entertainment, we always had our poker games. We wouldn't even get out of our police uniform. Go at the poker tables at some friend's house and stay there for the night. And when we come on duty, we'd still be in our uniforms. Sometimes we didn't even sleep.

JR: I'm going to stop the tape. I got to turn it over.

PT: Oh, okay.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

PT: They paid us $164 a month, and we thought it was pretty good pay, in those days.

JR: Was there a certain point that you had to decide whether you were staying?

PT: Yeah. And for my sake, I remember hearing about ships being torpedoed between here and the Mainland. I wasn't too happy going across this ocean right at that time. I felt safer back here, and the rest of the guys did, too. I said, "Heck, let's stay here."

JR: How many of you guys stayed?

PT: Seven of us.

JR: And did your family have any idea what was going on? I mean, were you able to communicate with them in any way?

PT: Well, just correspondence. My mother didn't think I'd ever get back, especially going in the

service over here after three-and-a-half years. So in July of '44, I went into the service. Instead of going back to my draft board, I had to go in here with the local boys and trained over here, took my basic training here. And then I ended up in Leyte in the Philippines, and then the invasion of Okinawa, the occupation forces in Korea, and I got back home five years later. Got out of the service, stayed home for about thirty days, and then I met someone here in the islands and came back over here and got married.

JR: And you've been here.

PT: Yeah, been here pretty much ever since. Got a job at Dole's [i.e., Hawaiian Pineapple Company] cannery. Worked in the cannery department for about two years and didn't like the work, so I went back to King City in '48, '49. My dad passed away in '50, December '50. And we were about to have our twin girls, so my wife said, "Let's go back to Hawai'i." Kind of a break there.

And I says, "Okay, let's go back to Hawai'i." Didn't know what I was going to do out here, but I went into the feed and grain business over here. And that's what I was doing over there for Ralston Purina, a company there in King City. So I've been in the feed and grain business ever since. Still in it.

JR: I hope you bear with me. I'm just going to keep dragging you back to the Pearl Harbor days.

PT: Some of the incidents there—I know one night there were flares up around Tantalus. And we were assigned—of course, right at the onset of the war, we heard that the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] picked up all the Japanese agents. And the agents that Japan used were all German agents, and they were all picked up that first day of war, that morning. They had them all spotted and picked them up. And there were a lot of flares going up in the city here. So we spotted this flare, and we kind of figured there were Japanese submarines out at sea and they were flashing lights and signals out there. So we crawled up to this place where this flashing was going on, and there was a short in a garage, a bulb was flickering. So that ended our big attack on that flare. (Chuckles)

JR: You mentioned that thing at the consulate. They had you there for a period—the Japanese Consulate.

PT: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: You were supposed to prevent . . .

PT: Just guard duty, prevent them from leaving the premises. They had to stay indoors all the time. And it seemed to me, I had an assignment there for a couple weeks. We were on about eight-hour duty. There were three shifts. Somebody else would replace us. We worked eight hours and sixteen off.

JR: Did anything happen when you were up there for those few weeks?

PT: No, not at the consulate. We couldn't communicate with them, but apparently they knew that, look, you're here and you're not to go outside. You're supposed to stay indoors.

JR: Were people allowed to come in? Do you remember?

PT: Into the consulate?

JR: Yeah.

PT: No, nobody was to trespass. We never did see anybody coming or going.

JR: So as far you knew, someone was in there and . . .

PT: Yeah, we saw the Japanese. They would come to the door and that's as far as they would come. But yeah, our orders were to not allow anybody in or anybody out.

JR: Had you handled a gun prior to that night that they gave you a riot gun?

PT: Oh yeah. Well, as a kid on the farm we always fired shotguns and rifles, and deer hunting, quail hunting, ducks. So I knew how to handle a gun if I had to use it.

JR: Were you given a uniform and that kind of thing?

PT: Not right at the beginning. Just a MP arm band and your helmet. And they gave you a gas mask. That was kind of our uniform for the first, oh, I'd say, first thirty days. Wore civilian clothes really. And then once we decided to stay here, join the police force, then we eventually got into police training and went through the school and got all the training that was necessary as a police officer.

JR: Where was the police station?

PT: On Bethel Street and I believe it's Houghtailing [Street]. Not Houghtailing, is it Halekauwila [Street]? The street that goes down to Hawaiian Electric plant. Maybe Queen Street and Bethel. Down there on the waterfront. [The police station was at the corner of Bethel and Merchant streets.] And since, they've moved from there to the old Sears building on Beretania [Street]. And I understand there'll be a new one down near the palace grounds.

JR: Yeah, they're building that on—I think it was the old bus depot or something.

PT: Yeah, it was the bus depot there. They're working on the parking lot now. I guess their station is pretty well completed. I thought the Sears building was a big building for the police department, but apparently they've outgrown it.

JR: Did you have much---did you have an office or anything when you finally were part of the force?

PT: No, we'd use one of their cars to go out on highway patrol. And that's just strictly on highway patrol duty. And then we'd have to catch a bus and come home, and then go on the bus to work. And we all had coupons—rations. And gasoline, too. If you had a car, you had to—well, everything was rationed. Alcohol---they made a Five Islands over here, called Five Islands.

JR: Was that a beer or vodka or gin?

PT: You know, I think it was a gin, Five Islands gin. But man, we used it for [rubbing] alcohol. Burned like a son of a gun. We played volleyball out in the yard in the lot and get bruised up, and we used that bloody Five Islands gin as alcohol to rub ourselves. And it burned. We'd buy liquor on a ration program. Everything was rationed—food, liquor, gasoline.

JR: Were you able to manage?

PT: We were able to manage, yeah.

JR: Can you remember any things you were always short of?

PT: Right at the beginning, meat was kind of short. We were short of meat. I remember, we took a trip to the Big Island, went up to Kūka'iau Ranch, and we brought back our suitcases full of steaks. It was rare to find here in town, so we brought. And this was where they had all the cattle up there. They had an abundance of beef on that island, so we brought back our suitcases full of beef.

(Laughter)

PT: But overall, there was always sufficient staples here.

JR: I talked to someone, and they had a hard time cooking at home 'cause of the gas, lights, and so forth, and I think they ended up staying in a place where they didn't have to cook. It was just too much trouble with the lines [to buy groceries] and all that stuff.

PT: We had electricity, I guess, and gas. We didn't have too much problems. And being a police officer, you go in the country, you get bananas, you get pineapples. I mean, people being so friendly. And police officers got a little priority. I mean, you go to a restaurant, you didn't pay for anything. They give you lunch.

JR: (Chuckles) Why do you think that was?

PT: To this day, I've gotten—oh, I just went to court, just on Monday. I got hooked for speeding—twenty-one miles [over the speed limit] in a thirty-five mile zone—and this judge hooked me for eighty-nine dollars. But that is one of the few tickets. I've been stopped many, many times, and I just give them the story—"I'm an ex-Honolulu police officer, and I know you're doing your duty"—before they start writing. Generally, they start writing tickets so fast now, because they go through the courts. In the old days, they'd write a ticket and they'd tear it up. You tell them the story and. . . .

Now, everything goes through the courts. Every citation, every tag has got to be recorded somewhere. "Where is this ticket?" And once they start writing, they can't stop.

And they don't want you to get out of your cars nowadays, either. They tell you, "No, we don't want you—stay in the car for safety."

"I want to talk to you." You go out and talk to them, tell 'em who you are and this and that. It always works. Except this one Hawaiian, over in Waimānalo, he wouldn't listen to me. He wrote his citation, and boy, eighty-nine bucks.

And I listen to Judge Watanabe over there, he gave some leniency. "Okay, you got a good record. [If] you were ten, fifteen miles over the speed limit . . . " But I was twenty-one miles. I guess it was too damn much, and he says, "You're going too fast, you pay the fine." No leniency at all.

JR: What was it like when you were doing it?

PT: Oh, I issued a lot of citations, a lot of tags. But if they had a good story, I wouldn't write 'em, I'd give 'em a warning.

JR: A good story, meaning an excuse or . . .

PT: I mean, there was some good reason why they were breaking the law.

(Pause)

But it was down on Hotel Street, you get involved down in that area. First you start out as a policeman, you walk a beat. And you had to be a fighter. Those service people would always drink, overdrink, and a lot of drunks raise hell. And when you're a damn draft dodger, you're not in uniform, you get called all kinds of names.

JR: But you were a football player, you must have been pretty . . . (Chuckles)

PT: Oh hell, we had a damn riot down there, I remember. We were on PA [public address] system, and one of our fellows up in dispatch station. And I said, "Call for replacements or help down here. These guys are up on the hood of the car, raising hell." And of course, we had two-way radios, and in little while we got reinforcements. But boy, it looked like. . . .

We had tried to put a guy—put handcuffs on him and everything. We had him there and were waiting for the meat wagon to come along, and before you know it there was thirty, forty, fifty people all around you. "Let the guy go!" You wonder what's going to happen next.

JR: So when things got ruckus was it the military fighting with their own kind or were they—I mean, was there any interaction between civilians?

PT: Well, it was civilians and military. But mostly, it seemed to me it was military people that would get out of hand. And of course, they would get stiff sentences during the war if you were out under the influence of alcohol, drunk. Two- or three-hundred-dollar fines. But these service people come back from duty, some of these guys just go beyond control, and they were tough to handle.

JR: You were walking a beat Downtown?

PT: Walking a beat, yeah.

JR: How long did you do that for?

PT: I did that for about sixty days.

JR: That was part of your . . .

PT: Part of the training, yeah. You got to walk a beat to start out with.

JR: And that was down, you said, in the Hotel Street area?

PT: In that Hotel Street area.

JR: From what I've read, that was a pretty interesting part of town back then.

PT: Yeah. Oh yeah. The whorehouses down there throughout the war—I mean, I've seen sailors and GIs. . . . The lines were completely around the block, waiting to go up to the whorehouse. I mean, just long lines. But it was all under control, as far as the gals being clean. And they had matrons that were head of these units. Strict control.

JR: What kinds of businesses were on your beat back then, do you remember?

PT: Just a bunch of bars and little stores. Chinatown hasn't changed very much down there. Little places, a lot of bars. Hotel Street hasn't changed too much.

JR: And these brothels, as they're called—the front of a brothel, did that look any different than the front of a bank?

PT: They were generally all upstairs. They were little two-story buildings, and they were upstairs. And they all had their little rooms, a series of them. Lot of the units on River Street, I think, are still there. If there's a two-story building down there, everything upstairs was the whorehouse. And I don't know---Chief [William] Gabrielson, the chief of police, a lot of people said he had an interest in those houses, made a fortune on it. But I don't know. And one of our fellows was in charge of those houses, one of the San Jose kids. He was made in charge. He talked to a lot of those matrons, the head of these houses. And seems to me, his wife got some pretty nice gifts from these heads of these departments—jewelry and stuff like that.

JR: Did you walk a daytime beat or a nighttime beat?

PT: Daytime beat. Yeah, mostly daytime beat. Yeah, as far as I can remember, it was daytime beat. Well, I walked some nighttime. I remember being down there, but nobody's on the streets at nighttime. Everything was closed up. So there wasn't too much activity at nighttime. Real strict control. The lights---all the windows had to be blacked out. I mean, this place was a ghost island for four years. And then little by little, curfews went six o'clock, seven o'clock, eight o'clock, and went up as the war went along. And then you go out on the battlefield, everything is lit up with flares. I mean the front lines, they're shooting flares all night long. It's all daylight. There's as much light as the daylight. The flares that the troops up in the front lines—there's flares up all night long, to see what's going on. Because the

Japanese fought everything. Their campaigns were to fight at night and go underground in the daytime. All those islands in the South Pacific are just loaded with caves, all underground. All their headquarters are all underground. And they go underground in the daytime and you wouldn't see anything, and then they'd come out at night. And of course, we would use flares and light it up. They would come through the lines, so I would shoot at 'em. And they wore kimonos, so you didn't know whether they were civilians or Japanese soldiers. Our orders were to shoot anybody, so there was a lot of slaughter of civilians on Okinawa.

(Pause)

JR: I'm still hammering away at this Pearl Harbor-type information, so you'll have to, again, bear with me.

PT: Yeah. As far as the community of Honolulu, it was a very peaceful little city in those days. They had trolley cars, a few taxis, a few automobiles. It was a real backward community, being a territory here. Seemed like everybody knew everybody.

JR: How did it feel to a guy like yourself from California?

PT: Well, it seemed like you're kind of in another world with the people here. So few *Haoles*. We thought there were so few White people here in the islands—all mixed, or Orientals, Hawaiians. But very easy people to get along with, very friendly. They really had the aloha spirit. And you went to parties, a lot of parties. Just a lot of fun with these people.

JR: Did you make many friends on the force when you working for the police department?

PT: On the force, yeah, we made quite a few friends. But everyone's gone that we had. Last sergeant I know left the police force about, oh, I think seven or eight years ago. Sergeant Jones. I think he was one of the last of the police officers.

JR: Do you remember his first name at all?

PT: Joe Jones.

JR: Joe Jones.

PT: Yeah, and he was Sergeant Joe Jones. He finally became a detective. He was highway patrol with us. I think he was the last of the police officers that left Honolulu.

JR: Did you choose to go into the traffic investigation arm of the department?

PT: No, they select us.

JR: What would you have chosen if you had a say in the matter?

PT: I thought that was okay. They gave you a car to work with. Certainly walking a beat was no fun, guard duty and stuff like that.

JR: What were the other options?

PT: The other option was motor patrolman. Had your own car and you became a motor patrolman. They assign you an area. Or work in dispatch or go into detective work. But it didn't seem to me like they gave you much opportunity. Once you got into an area, they kept you there.

JR: What was the makeup of the force back then?

PT: I'd say about 300 police officers. They had chief of police, and I think right at the start of the war, maybe one assistant chief. And then right away they made a bunch of assistant chiefs. About a half a dozen of them were promoted to assistant chief. Our governor, John Burns, he was a captain there at the police station. And his brother [Edward] became assistant chief at the police department. He's still living. Yeah, he's still living.

JR: What was the racial makeup of the force?

PT: I'd say the majority was Oriental. The majority was Oriental. Quite a few Japanese were on there, and you kind of looked at 'em (chuckles) and wondered how they felt about this bloody war. If there was an invasion right there and then, if they would be part of us or part of them. But after a while, you got to know all of them. They're just like any of the rest of us. But the first time, you would begin to wonder. You look at these guys, hey, that guy's Japanese, that guy's Japanese.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-11-2-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Paul Tognetti (PT)

February 19, 1992

Waikīkī, O'ahu

BY: Joe Rossi (JR)

JR: This is the continuation of an interview with Paul Tognetti, conducted February 19, 1992, at the Elks Club in Waikīkī. The interviewer is Joe Rossi.

PT: With the police department as traffic investigator, we'd be called to the scene. We'd have certain areas to cover every month and then we'd change beats. And you'd either be here in the city or out in the country. We'd patrol for eight hours a day, and then when there were accidents, why, we'd be called on our two-way radio and we'd appear at the scene—investigate, find out who was at fault, and many times issue citations. Not like the no-fault insurance program we have today, where it's basically insurance companies that settle accidents. In our day, we'd find out from the statements that the drivers would issue, and then we'd decide who was to blame.

JR: And you'd decide right then and there or in court?

PT: No, we'd decide right there and then. "Look, you did this. This is wrong. This is why you had the accident. I'm going to give you a citation." And of course, then they can go to court and etcetera. But we would make our decision right there at the scene of the accident.

JR: Would there be a penalty in addition to the damage?

PT: Yes, when we go to court. If they were at fault, then yes, there's a penalty that they would pay. And then the insurance companies would pick up on that, on the report of the investigation, and kind of follow through. "Look, you're [not] at fault, so the other guy's insurance is going to take care of you," according to the report.

JR: Was there a lot of traffic back then?

PT: I would say there was. It seemed to me every day we had an accident. (Chuckles) When we went through without an accident, it was something. Whew, no report today. And you made your reports not during the time of the eight hours. Reports were made after your tour of duty. So sometimes you're down at the office there a couple hours after work writing up your reports. Of course, there are times in different areas we could take time off and do our reporting on the beat. But most of the times—accident prevention, we were supposed to have

been seen out on the highway as part of the prevention. "There's a white car. Look." People look at a white car, accident prevention. Maybe they can think a little bit more about driving down the roadway. We should've always been seen on the highway.

JR: Were there certain areas that were more likely to have accidents than others?

PT: I would say the accidents in town—probably more accidents in town. But there are more minor accidents. In the country, you'd have your fatal accidents, with the high speeds. And the area between Honolulu and Schofield Barracks, Kīpapa Gulch, lot of accidents in that area. And these guys had to return to their base at a certain hour—speeders. We'd be up on top of a hill and we'd watch these guys, we'd prime for 'em. And I mean, they sailed through there sixty, seventy miles an hour. And then we'd have to catch them before they got to the base. (Laughs)

JR: Once they're on base . . .

PT: Once they're on base, then . . .

JR: (Laughs) . . . they're home free.

PT: They're home free. They take over—military. And as far as civil authority, why, we had no grounds.

JR: Now, at that time, there was the blackout. The headlights were blacked out.

PT: Yes.

JR: Did that create special problems?

PT: Yeah, a lot more accidents. They had a shield over the headlights. A shield and then they had a slit of about two inches wide, half inch high, and that was your light, a little slit. And so at nighttime, it was ten-, fifteen-miles-an-hour speed limit. You just couldn't see. And the rest of the bulb was a kind of a bluish. But it didn't put out much light. So everybody was slow driving after darkness.

JR: There were still accidents even though people were . . .

PT: Oh yes, plenty of accidents at night. Although we never patrolled at night, highway patrol. There were accidents, but our major accidents were in the daytime. And a lot of off limits in the evenings. For the first part of the war, we were restricted from the highways. Right at the beginning of the war, six o'clock everybody had to be off the road. Nobody, really. You had to have a pass to be on the highway.

JR: In a car?

PT: In a car. Yes, there were restrictions. And as the war went on, the restrictions were eased a little bit and it got better. But a lot of restrictions for the civilians. Major thing for restrictions was to control the population—control the Japanese, etcetera—in the event of any outbreaks of

war or anything of that nature, to have the population under control.

JR: Now, as a police officer, were you less affected by some of these restrictions? Did you have more leniency in some areas?

PT: We had a little bit more leniency. Anybody that wore a badge had a little more lenience. After hours we'd do a certain amount of sneaking around the streets to get to a certain place. We'd hide behind trees. Of course, we acted like civilians. We wore civilian clothes, and if we had to draw out our badge, we would draw it out. But normally we were supposed to have operated just as any normal civilian, to follow the law. But yes, we abused the law once in a while, to meet a group at a certain place and play poker or something like that, to pass the time away.

JR: Last time you mentioned playing poker. What kind of social activities were going on back then for a single guy like yourself?

PT: Nothing really. Parties. Parties during weekends, and this all happened to be in daylight. Luaus [*lū'aus*] in the country. Friends of the police department would go to luaus [*lū'aus*] and have a good time. But always activities would be in the daytime, not in the evenings. And as the restrictions were eased after two or three years, then we got in some little bit of nightlife—up to ten o'clock or something like that. But not too much activity, really. We'd have our own little activity in the Tusitala Court. We'd put up a volleyball net and play volleyball. Have our contests that way, activity. We were pretty much restricted.

JR: And you were playing sports, too, during the war, weren't you?

PT: Yeah, I joined the Healani football team, owned by Scotty Schuman, the Schuman General Motors distributor. Neal Blaisdell was the coach. And of course, he was coaching at St. Louis High School. And he was public relation top man in Dole's. And we played for $100 a game. There was a league here, semi-pro league. The air force had a team. Healani was our team. I think there were four or five teams here.

JR: One hundred dollars a game, what do you mean by that?

PT: Hmm?

JR: Was the $100 divided amongst the team?

PT: No, each member got about a hundred bucks a game.

JR: That's pretty good.

PT: Yeah, it was better than doing nothing.

JR: Now, you had played for San Jose State [University]. What was the caliber of football like [in Honolulu]?

PT: Well, with the Healani's, of course, they were all mostly graduate students. I'd say it was every bit equal to any good college team. We all had a certain amount of experience. And so

it was pretty good caliber football. And a lot of local boys were on the team. It was good football.

JR: Where were the games played?

PT: At the old Honolulu Stadium, King Street. At that time, it was about 15,000 [seat] capacity. Wooden stadium, termite eaten. (Laughs) But the field was okay, grass field. Heavy rains---I played in football [games] with twelve inches of water on the field. You kick the football, I mean, it would plop right down in the water. But it would just be a mud game, and it was equal for everybody and you played it.

JR: Was there a season?

PT: Yeah. The football season—basically in the summer, summer months. And it went into the fall, and that's when we got into the rains.

JR: What was Neal Blaisdell like? What kind of a guy was he?

PT: Neal? Very, very friendly person. Part-Hawaiian and very friendly, easy to get along with. He was, of course, a star in his own days. I think all sports. I guess he must have been a good baseball player, because he played for the [Baltimore Orioles]. And football, I'm not too sure. But they always put out good teams for St. Louis High School, very competitive every season. And he didn't believe in hard workouts. Go through some of the plays—I mean, enjoy the game, really, just for fun. In our league, anyway. High school might have been a little bit different. But it seems to me he was a very easygoing coach. It was just a sport, secondary thing. Main thing, get your education for your future. Just go out and have fun.

JR: How did the team do?

PT: And the teams did well. Yeah, basically. They all liked to play for him. He was good.

JR: Was he involved in any political stuff back then?

PT: Oh, yes. He became mayor of the city of Honolulu for [five] terms. Very popular person. The Blaisdell family, of course, they're very popular in Hawai'i and Honolulu. His father, I think, was the chief of the fire department. [Blaisdell's father was an assistant fire chief for the Honolulu Fire Department; his brother William became fire chief of Honolulu.]

And in the police force, we had a lot of reserves. There was a reserve group. The regular police officers, and then you had a group of reserves. Anyone that was interested in becoming a reserve, was interested in police work, signed up and they would join the regular police officers on duty in the evenings. So it was almost like a double force, the regular police force and the reserves, and there were almost that many reserves as regular police officers. They like kind of doubled the entire police force. And they wore khakis instead of the OD [olive drab] uniforms that the police department had, to differentiate a reserve from the regular police force.

JR: What were the uniforms of the police, the regular police force?

PT: Olive drab. Very heavy wool . . .

(Laughter)

PT: . . . for Hawai'i uniforms. And the reserves had the regular GI khakis, and they were lightweight, they were all right. We wore the heavy wool uniforms.

JR: Did they launder that for you or did you have to do it yourself?

PT: No, we took care of our own laundry. And they had to be cleaned and pressed weekly.

JR: Did you remain friendly with Blaisdell after?

PT: Yes, yeah. He was on a. . . . I understand he just had a heart attack and died. I don't think he was really anywhere. [Blaisdell actually suffered a brain hemorrhage while gardening.] The whole community was in shock. He was seventy-two years of age, but in good health. My father-in-law was very good friends of Blaisdell, being with Dole's cannery. And they always played their card game down there. Cards and dominos, I guess they call it. Big battles.

JR: Your father-in-law, who was that?

PT: Wilkinson.

JR: What was his first name?

PT: James Wilkinson. He was in charge of the double seamer department, putting the lid on the cans. And so it was kind of the. . . . I mean, it was very delicate equipment. If things weren't going right, you just didn't seal the can properly, you'd have a bunch of leaks. You run the company to the ground real fast. So that equipment had to be in first-class shape. And he knew double seaming very well for years. So he had a very important job there, putting the lids on these cans.

But pineapple was the big thing in those days. Sugar was a big thing. Today, I just heard a radio broadcast yesterday, they're talking about eliminating pineapple on the island of Lāna'i and going to the tourist industry. It's more prosperous. I think this is the time to go over and buy. I understand, things are still reasonable over there. Five years from now, it will be out of sight. We're taking a trip over there this year. I hear they're selling brand-new homes for $100,000. Whether they're up on the hill somewhere—it's hard to believe they'd be down on the beach at that price. But I think that's a good investment, to go to Lāna'i and buy a piece of property now. If it's available. I mean, sure, maybe it's all leasehold. You know, it's owned by Dole basically. Probably leasehold. But even that. See, like it is over here, you have leasehold property and after thirty or forty years, they'd have to sell in order to stay within the tax structure. Bishop [Estate] is selling. We bought our lot in Niu Valley fifteen years ago. Half of the valley sold for a dollar a square foot, we paid three dollars a square foot. Today it's worth thirty or forty dollars a square foot. So go to Lāna'i. Now is the time.

JR: (Chuckles) This is your advice to me.

PT: That's the time to buy. Right now, that's kind of like new pioneer country opening up.

JR: You mentioned Schuman also. Did you have much contact with him?

PT: Not too much with [Gustave] "Scotty" Schuman. But he was apparently a good gentleman to deal with. He owned and operated the General Motors dealership for years. They were down there where the palace grounds are [at the corner of Beretania and Richards streets]. They had a dealership right there, real ancient building. They knocked it down [in the sixties], then they moved down to Beretania Street.

JR: You didn't stay with the police force for the whole duration of the war.

PT: No, just till fifteenth of July in '44. Got out [of the military], just to the day, fifteenth of July in '46.

JR: So were you drafted?

PT: Yes, drafted.

JR: Could you have stayed on the force?

PT: No. At that point, nobody—when they had the invasion in Europe, no personnel were deferred, at least from the police department. When the time came up and your number came up, you had to go. I think there were very few industries where you would be deferred. Possibly teachers or 4-Fs, some ailment that they didn't want you. But pretty much, if you were healthy, they'd draft you 100 percent into the armed forces. Thanks gosh for today, we've got kind of a professional armed forces. They don't need drafts. Person who's not interested in the military doesn't have to go. I think it looks like it's the thing to be, to have a professional armed forces where you join it and get paid for it. And it's very technical equipment that you have nowadays, and you've got to be trained for it. I think the days of the infantry are gone. This last war we had with Iraq, the air force basically won that war.

JR: What was your feelings about getting into the military at that time?

PT: Well, I guess one has kind of mixed emotions. But you felt like, I guess, there was a reason for having this war, World War II. [Adolf] Hitler and [Hideki] Tojo were trying to take over the world, rule the world. And of course, when you're attacked you kind of defend yourself. So there were good reasons to see we got to get these guys and wipe them off the map.

But then you get into the actual war, like on Okinawa, and you begin to think, what are we doing over here? Us, just a small force, getting killed off, for what reason? It seemed to me, it's politics, and the leaders are the ones that should be punished, right from the beginning. They start these wars and make the decisions, and wars are not a benefit to anybody. They're costly and expensive and everybody loses. And so it seemed to me, you just got to go after the leaders. They're the ones that get you involved, make their decisions.

And I think more and more, we're going to have less wars. We've had a lot of small skirmishes, with less big wars, because I think people are getting educated to wars. Really,

it's just destruction on all sides. What benefits are there? We won the war in (chuckles) Iraq. Did we win the war? [Saddam] Hussein is still leading his country over there. I guess we got all the oil we want for the time being. For how long, I don't know, depending on a few years down the road.

But all in all, I think that wars are no solution to civilization. Meet at the table and argue out your differences. Hell of a lot better. Or have economic wars. They're okay. Like we're having this bashing with Japan right now. It's a hell of a lot better than having a war where you're shooting one another. Sit down, discuss 'em, and here you are, tangling with leaders and leaders of industry, leaders of countries. "All right, you guys battle it out by words, not by guns." And I think this is the way to go, across the table.

And there are reasons why your economies in some countries are better than in others. I think that it still always goes back to good, hard work—good organization, good, hard work. I always believe in the theory of 98 percent perspiration and 2 percent inspiration. That's kind of my view of life—hard work. And you see the people in poverty countries that do hard work. I see the Vietnamese come to our country and they're successful where a lot of us are not successful. But they are successful. They work hard. There's land up there on the North Shore in agriculture. Nobody had a future up there. The Kahuku plantation are looking for people to farm land. They try it. Experts from the West Coast come over for one year, they make their investments. Between the birds and the rain and the winds, they wouldn't succeed. But the Vietnamese are up there, and they're successful. Hard work! They put up their windbreaks, solve the bird problem, solve their wind problem. Lots of good, hard work, and they're successful.

But if one has to serve a short time—like in Switzerland, every citizen has to serve one year. I think that's good. For one year—say a one-year term—serve it. I think you enjoy civilization a lot more once you get into one year of military. Two years that I got into it, all of a sudden, oh, civilian life, what a paradise compared to being in the service.

JR: Did you have any idea that it was going to be . . .

PT: Regimentation, regimentation. Officers are well off, but anybody under officers, you're just a number. No, I didn't like it, even though I was in counterintelligence corps [CIC]. On the ship coming back from Korea to West Coast, I saw the treatment of the officers and the unenlisted personnel—terrible. The food, the treatment---in general, officers were first class, and the rest of 'em were second-rate citizens. I didn't like it.

JR: You were on the police force at the time that you got [drafted]. What did you get, a notice in the mail or something? How does that work? How do you know that you were drafted?

PT: Yes, you get a notice from the armed forces, federal government.

JR: Where did you have to go?

PT: Well, my draft board was California. And my seven buddies—six of 'em, one died over here. Five of 'em went back to their draft boards when they got their notice, I believe. They went back to their draft boards. I don't know what happened to my bloody draft board. But then I

had this call from a FBI agent. Says, "You're going on the ship in the morning, and if you go on that ship, we'll pick you up in San Francisco. You go into service over here."

JR: Why did they say that?

PT: I don't know. I didn't question it. I heard the words FBI.

(Laughter)

PT: That was enough. I took it to heart and said, "I guess these guys know what they're doing." Who in the hell is going to buck the Federal Bureau of Investigation? But it turned out I got into CIC work, which is part of the same group.

JR: How did that happen? You got to choose that, or they just chose it?

PT: No, with the police background I had—and apparently they were looking for more agents here in Honolulu. So I got involved.

JR: What exactly did they have you do?

PT: CIC, the first three months was to interrogate old Japanese for their loyalty.

JR: In Hawai'i.

PT: In Hawai'i. I used an interpreter, and he asked the questions.

JR: Are these people that were suspected of doing something?

PT: No, not really. I think it was just a routine program. Let 'em know that we still want your loyalty and we want you to tell us that.

JR: Now, this was in '44?

PT: This was in '44, right.

JR: Kind of far into the war.

PT: Well, it was far into the war, but '44—in March of '44 was just at the invasion of Europe. It was really the climax of the whole war. And nobody was deferred and nobody knew, hey, where are we going to go from here? It was really at the climax of the war, World War II. Whether Japan was going to get stronger, things were going to get tougher, it was hard to say.

JR: Where did they have you doing this interrogating?

PT: At the Dillingham Building on Bishop Street. That was the FBI office and the counterintelligence corps office there, Dillingham Building.

JR: Did you have an office, did you have a room?

PT: The counterintelligence corps had their own rooms, yes. And the FBI had their own rooms next door. So we worked in civilian clothes, just like civilians.

JR: Did you go get the people or did someone else bring them to you?

PT: Oh, they brought 'em to us. Apparently, working together with the Federal Bureau of Investigations [and] CIC, they came in. They knew they had to come in, report, and be interviewed for loyalty.

JR: Do you remember the kind of questions that they might have been asked?

PT: I really don't remember. But it was pertaining to loyalty. "In the event of an attack, who would you be loyal to, Japan or the United States?" A question of that nature. "We want to know your loyalty. Are you in support of the U.S. government or are you in support of Japan?"

And 100 percent were loyal U.S. citizens. Nobody would say no. "Heavens, if we had an invasion or something, we're not going to shoot Americans."

Just like this friend of mine, Naka. "If the Japanese soldier come on the beach, would you shoot him?"

"I'm an American. Japanese, I shoot him!"

JR: Did the people seem nervous about having to go through this?

PT: No, they didn't. They knew that we're not a bunch of barbarians. Like when we invaded Okinawa, the Okinawans were told a bunch of barbarians were invading the island. "They're going to kill all of you. Go underground for three months. We'll exterminate these barbarians in three months, and then we'll all come out and be at peace." Well, just the opposite turned out. We were peaceful and we liked to get along with people, and we're just after the Japanese armed forces, not the civilians. And we had a military government that took care of civilians.

JR: They had you dress up as a civilian. Why do you think they had you do that?

PT: They didn't want, really, a military person interrogating a civilian. I think they felt more at home if that person was a civilian asking questions to a civilian. It seemed to me, it kept them much more at ease. If you were a military person, then it was kind of military versus civilian. So we were kind of in the same class.

JR: Do you know any of the other activities that office was doing at that time?

PT: Counterintelligence corps, anything that was detrimental to the armed forces, they would investigate. And there were communists, even in our armed forces. They would raid letters, pick up letters. Some of the armed forces people were really communist. Somehow or other,

they said, "Let's check this guy's mail. From his background we think he's a communist." And so they'd read his mail before he'd get it. I mean, they'd open up people's mail. On Okinawa, the same way. And I opened up—I didn't, but the officer did, and they said, "Let's keep an eye on this particular person. He is a communist, and we want to watch him very carefully." I'd have to go in their bag. They would say, "Look, we want to get more letters out of his bag." When he's on tour somewhere, I'd go into his bag and open it up and see if I could find letters that we hadn't uncovered that were detrimental, read 'em and see what they're all about. And then pass it on to the officers in charge. We'd have to do the dirty work and pass it on that way.

JR: So you were doing the interrogation work for, you said, three months?

PT: Here in Honolulu, right.

JR: Then what happened after that?

PT: Then they needed a replacement. CIC becomes part of G2 in the divisions. You have your G2 section—engineers, infantry. There are about four phases of the infantry, the division. So CIC worked under G2, under whoever was in charge. It happened to have been a colonel who was in charge of Seventh Division. So I was with Seventh Division CIC. We had a bunch of agents working for 'em. And our job, basically, was to look for enemy equipment and documents that would help strategy with the armed forces. If we find something that might be beneficial. . . . Or, interrogate anybody we thought was anti-American, which once you get 'em into the service and you're overseas, by that time, you know if he's a loyal U.S. soldier, not a communist or whatever. By that time, you pretty much know that, look, everybody in the armed forces is loyal to America, our armed forces. Seldom you got involved with a negative person overseas. But we were looking for enemy equipment, enemy documents that would help our armed forces. And we didn't find much, except this one Japanese officer we captured. He was in love with an Okinawan nurse.

JR: Where was that?

PT: On Okinawa. We captured the only Japanese officer in the entire Pacific campaign, it was our detachment. And he was in love with this Okinawan nurse. And he had a lot of enemy blueprints, documents. And we held a wedding at Twenty-fourth Corps for the Japanese soldier and the Okinawan nurse. In the middle of battle, to have a wedding at Twenty-fourth Corps headquarters. General Hodges was our general, and he allowed it. And of course, the troops up in the front lines heard about the wedding. They couldn't believe this was coming out, and they were just very upset and about ready to turn their weapons the other way, shoot on headquarters.

JR: I missed something. Why would they have a wedding? I don't know. Why would the general want to have that wedding?

PT: He wanted to have it because that's what—apparently they made an agreement with this officer. "Now you said you've got a lot of maps, lot of everything, all the stronghold points in the southern part of Okinawa that we could attack. You show us the maps, we know that here's the general's headquarters and here's where they direct all their forces. And you got all

this information. All right, you give us all that information and we'll let you have your wedding." Apparently they made an agreement. And he came out and said, "Look, what this officer gave us saved hundreds of American soldiers lives, and this is why we made a deal with him and that's why we said we'll allow him to have this wedding."

JR: Okay, I follow you now.

PT: And it was played up in *Time* magazine, all over the country. So it wasn't kept secret, but very unusual to say the least.

JR: Where did your wartime experiences take you? It took you to, you mentioned, Okinawa.

PT: Leyte, the island of Leyte in the Philippines. That was the first island in the return of the Philippines, the island of Leyte. From there, they went into Luzon a little later. But I got down there, just on Leyte, for a few days, and then they said, "We want you to go on board this ship out in the Manila Bay." And I soon found out there was an invasion force forming for the invasion of Okinawa. And so, really, I went for a short duration to the Philippines and aboard this ship for the invasion of Okinawa.

And I never saw so many ships in all my life. I was looking around Okinawa, I mean, ships, like you see that one ship out there [PT points to a ship in the distance], from here to there. And I mean, it was so well organized. They all came in there that morning before invasion. And you look around and all of a sudden, hey, we're not here alone. (Chuckles) Unbelievable force that had all been there, all congregated, and zero hour approached to invade Okinawa.

Of course, we were given literature about terrible things on Okinawa. Snakes and a lot of—mostly snakes. They had a good deal on snakes. We never saw a snake in all our time. They give you the history of it. Let's see, Okinawans are supposed to be second-class Japanese, the workhorse of Japan. Basically, Okinawa is an agriculture base. Their armed forces were well entrenched on the southern half of Okinawa. All underground tunnels, a maze of underground tunnels in the southern half of Okinawa. We cut the island in half. The marines went north with no resistance at all. There was nobody, no armed forces in the northern half of Okinawa. Everything was in the south. So the marines went down on the west coast, and the Seventh Division, Twenty-fourth Corps, went down to the east coast. There were about six divisions—Twenty-fourth Corps, Tenth Army.

And it looked like it was kind of the last resort for Japan. They came in there with their kamikaze planes, where they had one pilot and dynamite and just tried to destroy ships. And on that basis, which they were successful in a few cases, they directed their [planes] direct at the ship, with one person piloting the unit. And that was kind of a hari-kari thing. "It's the end of my life, but I'm going to get this load of bomb into the ship." And he guided it in there, until it was knocked out by our aircraft. But that was their kind of final explosion, kamikaze pilots diving into ships. Not very successful. And of course, then Harry Truman, with his atomic bomb on Hiroshima—guess there were two bombs dropped [i.e., one on Hiroshima, one on Nagasaki]. And that pretty much brought the end of the war in Japan.

JR: Had you heard anything about these atomic bombs?

PT: No, not a thing, until they were dropped. Even then, we weren't sure. But we knew that, look, campaign is over here, the next assignment would be invade Japan. That would have been a slaughter, I think. I think the atomic bomb saved a lot of American lives.

JR: So were you doing your CIC work throughout this period?

PT: Yes, throughout this period, and then went up to Korea, occupation forces. We did CIC work up there. Worked together very closely with the civilian forces. They had a detachment in the army for civilian programs, and we worked close with them and interviewed a lot of organizations for their political backgrounds. That was basically our job, to interview these various groups, find out what their political aspirations were. And after a few days, there were just a lot of different political groups that want to take over the country. And it was our job to kind of interrogate these groups. Who are they? Why are they forming this group? Why do they want to run this country? And basically, they wanted a peaceful approach to it. And Syngman Rhee was kind of the leader of the country, and he became the first [South] Korean president. And he was quite old at the time, too.

JR: I'm going to stop you just for a second.

PT: Okay.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

PT: After serving one year of duty in Korea, they wanted people to stay longer. I was tech[nical] sergeant there then, and they offered me a warrant officer's rating, and I didn't accept it. I felt like two years in the service was enough. I didn't like the regimentation really, observing people in the armed forces. There's better ways of life in civilian life than this. And being overseas for five years, I wanted to get home and get back to civilization. So I decided against staying any longer down there. And I guess, not too long after that they had the Korean conflict over there, and I was glad to be out of there. You could see a lot of tensions brewing over there among the Korean forces, north and south. So, came back to Seattle and was up there for a couple of nights and a couple of days, and discharged in California, to the day, two years, July 15, '46.

JR: The day that you . . .

PT: The day that I went into the service. Very happy to get out. Served my time. And once you're out, and you've served, and you come back survived, then those experiences are good experiences. If you play it smart, you can survive. And you could not play it too smart, especially in the infantry. You're going to get killed. But with the training that you receive before you go into the actual battle, seems to me you can pretty well take care of yourself. They tell you what to do. "Don't do this, don't do that." And if you do the right things that they tell you, seems to me a person's got a decent chance of surviving, unless they're direct hits or something. But a lot of our people die, I think, from lack of following through with

their training program, carelessness.

But being an infantryman, I think that's the tough job in war. Kill or be killed. Watching those soldiers walk up to the front lines, determination on their faces, facing death as you march up. And some of these fellows are all on the point system. I think 140 points, you go back home. You're taken out of the actual fighting military, from line duty. And some of these guys would go up there with 137 points, two or three more points to go. Had to serve another week or two, and you might be killed. And you could see it on their faces. "Man, I hope I survive this week." Well, it's a tough business. So wars in general, they're a thing of the past, it seems to me. There are a lot of other ways to solve problems in this world besides going to war—negotiations.

JR: You got up to Seattle, then did you come back to Hawaii? Did you stay on the Mainland?

PT: I stayed on the Mainland for about a month with my folks. And then had my girlfriend in Hawai'i, came back over here, and married into the Wilkinson family.

JR: How did you meet her, if I may ask?

PT: Her brother was on the football team that I had, this little Pop Warner football team that I trained here during the police period.

JR: You were coaching?

PT: I was coaching them. And her brother happened to have been on the team, so he invited me home for dinner one evening and that started a romance. I liked his sister. And like he said, "I don't want you to come up to my home so I can play football, that's not it. Come up anyway and have dinner with us." He had a good-looking sister.

(Laughter)

JR: Can I just ask a question about the coaching? Was this a children's league?

PT: Children's league. Ten to twelve years of age. Youngsters. About a dozen of 'em, just enough for a football team. And they kind of got the word out, "Look, there's a guy over here, wants to get a team together." Most of them were *Haole*. There were a few mixed kids from this area, Waikīkī area. And we had a lot of fun together.

JR: Where did you practice?

PT: We practiced right here at the Elks. The old house that the Elks Club had was an old home, built, it seemed to me, way back in the missionary time. A real old house. Had a cellar downstairs, and it had a little area we could put our uniforms in there. And we used their front lawn as part of the practice field. It was big enough, we can pass and run and run plays. So it worked out all right.

JR: Were there games with other teams in other areas?

PT: Yeah, in different areas in the city. There were four or five teams that we played. So there was a little bit of a competition. Kids could get involved in sports. And Blaisdell at that time got us to play a pre-game at one of their big games. To play in the Honolulu Stadium for a ten-, twelve-year-old youngster must have been something. And we enjoyed it.

JR: What kind of a coach were you?

PT: Basically, it's just to get the kids together, good friendship. No, I wasn't a sturdy coach. They had to know their plays, run through their plays. But I never called the plays. They did everything themselves, basically. Today, it's kind of more like a machine. The coach calls all the plays from the sidelines. In the old days, why, the kids call the plays. They were on the field, and they called their own plays, ran the team themselves. Hopefully, they called the right plays. And they had fun. Nowadays, it's win or else. It's a real professional type of a thing—business. Not a real happy sport activity anymore. It's a whole new ball game.

JR: Were you volunteering your time for that?

PT: Yeah, it was all volunteer work. Time off, be with the kids. And I think it's—especially during the war here, they had to do something. I mean, there was no activities. I don't know what kids did at home besides their schoolwork. And if they're involved in sports, get out play a little basketball. And I think---yeah, I did a little basketball work, too. And I refereed basketball for—they had A league and a B league, and I refereed B league and did some officiating. And it was these youngsters playing. Like the football, we went into basketball. So we had a little basketball league. I worked for them on basketball, too.

JR: So, getting back to your romance.

PT: Well, getting back to my romance. I was on the police force, and a little football, and met Virginia. And she had graduated from Roosevelt High School and got into Bishop Insurance. She was working in the insurance company Downtown as an appraiser. Apparently, knew her work very well. We got married and had our twin girls.

JR: So you came back here, then, and got married. When did you get married?

PT: Got married in '46. And stayed here until '48, went back to California in '48. And then my dad passed away in '50, December of '50. And we were about to have our twin girls, and Virginia said, "Let's go back to Hawai'i."

I says, "Okay." So in '50, we came back to Hawai'i and we had our twin girls and settled here ever since.

JR: That was okay with you, to come back to Hawai'i?

PT: Yeah. I had a good job on the West Coast, assistant general manager—commissions and everything—and I took about a 50 percent cut coming back to the islands. I really didn't know what I was getting into, but I guess I followed her along. And with the feed and grain business on the West Coast I got into basically the same feed business over here, and been in it ever since. Dealing with farmers—about the best thing I knew, I guess. So it was good to

me.

JR: What did you do those couple of years that you were here after you got married in '46, '47?

PT: I worked for Dole's cannery for two years. I was the superintendent, foreman in the cooking department. And working in Dole's cannery—a lot of noisy cans, and hot over the cookers—I got a little tired of that work. An opportunity came up on the West Coast in my hometown, so I decided to go back. And my wife followed me, after the dust settled a bit. At the time, I was wondering if that was going to happen, but my father-in-law says, "Look, you go where your husband goes." So I guess he instilled her in getting her back to California.

JR: She finally got back here, though.

PT: Yeah, she finally worked her way back over here. I'm glad she did. I fell in love with this place, and I still like it. I'm glad I'm here, [rather] than in California. There have been all kinds of opportunities. People want to work here. And real estate, got involved in that a little bit. And I think there are some opportunities over in Lāna'i right now, from what I'm hearing a little bit. But I think those will probably be the last opportunities over here in the Hawaiian islands.

JR: Well, we're standing here in Waikīkī. It's a little bit different than it was when you came back in '41.

PT: Oh yes. We were on a ship like that one sailing out there, and P-40s and Grumman navy planes were diving on the ship. I said, "Man, this is some fortress of the Pacific." Three days before Pearl Harbor I thought we had all our defenses raring to go. Come December the seventh, such a beautiful sneak attack. I think the only planes that got up in the air were some P-40 planes down in Hale'iwa. They had a strip down there, and about a half-a-dozen planes got up. I think those were the only planes that we had in the air that day. They caught all our planes at Hickam base and Kāne'ohe base. They knocked them all out. They attacked all of our air bases—all military installations, basically. And they did a good job of it. And I think they really didn't know what they did, or they should have come back here, invaded. And I heard later that, yes, their review of their attack, something went wrong. The pictures weren't clear enough or someone didn't study them well enough. They could have come back and taken these islands three or four months later without any problem.

Then their armed forces combined an attack on Midway Island in June of that year [1942]. But apparently it was too late. We were well fortified here. And I remember planes leaving this island all day in June to attack the Japanese fleet coming to Midway. And they knocked out about three of their carriers in the Midway attack and really set 'em back. If they had taken Midway, then they would have probably hopped over on these islands. But it was too late. They should've attacked these islands, came back. And they could have taken them thirty, sixty days later without any problems 'cause we were crippled badly.

JR: Did it feel that way?

PT: Yes, it felt that way. But at the same time, I kind of figured maybe they'll just bypass Hawai'i and go to the West Coast. (Laughs) No, somehow or other I felt if there wasn't an

invasion—of course, the first few weeks there was talk there was an invasion going on here. But it was all rumors. And more and more, "I guess they haven't attacked these islands." And every day went by, we felt safer.

JR: You know, you've got quite a story there with your Pearl Harbor experiences. How often do you find yourself talking about that day?

PT: Not too much, unless a special—come December the seventh, or twenty-five years or fifty-year experiences, and people [say], "Hey, you were here, and we want to talk to you about your experiences and what happened then." People are very inquisitive and want to know. There is a book out there at Pearl Harbor I got to go pick up. I saw it up in San Jose. One of the players had it. And there was quite a write up about the team, pictures and all. *Day of Infamy* talks about myself, and then there's another book, and there are several pages in there about the whole team. They say it's on sale out there at Pearl Harbor, at the bookstore there.

JR: I appreciate you telling it one more time for me, for my sake.

PT: Well, I enjoyed it very much. If people want to hear about the experiences, I enjoy talking about 'em. It's hard to believe that there are so few people around, really, that were here at that time. You'd think there would be a lot of people, but I guess local people—well, I guess there are a few, but not too many. Either they've left the island, or fifty years ago is fifty years and they're not around anymore. No, I've enjoyed life out here and it's a beautiful place. Beautiful place to raise a family.

JR: Thanks a lot.

PT: Yeah, a pleasure. Thank you for the interview.

END OF INTERVIEW

AN ERA OF CHANGE

Oral Histories of Civilians in World War II Hawai'i

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